Special Online Briefing with Geoffrey R. Pyatt, Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources

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À : k.alahassa123@yahoo.fr

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London Hub

MODERATOR: Greetings to everyone from the United States Department of State's London International Media Hub. I'd like to welcome all of our participants from the South Asia region and the rest of the world. Please note, this is an on-the-record briefing with Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources Geoffrey R. Pyatt.

Assistant Secretary Pyatt will have some opening remarks, and then take questions from individual journalists. You all have his biographical details in the registration to this webinar. We've received a few questions in advance.

I will now turn it over to Assistant Secretary Geoffrey R. Pyatt for his opening remarks. Assistant Secretary Pyatt, the floor is yours.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: Great, thank you very much. Good afternoon. Good evening to those of you who are in Delhi. Thanks for staying on late. I wanted to take just a couple of minutes at the top to share some impressions from my trip to India last week, and then happy to really take the conversation in whatever direction is useful to everybody.

I would start with a headline from India, which is I come back from this trip maximally bullish on the potential for us to continue to build what I believe is one of our most important energy and energy security relationships in the world. Let me do the program backwards, because I finished up my trip with a day in Hyderabad, a city that I had not been back to for 12 years, and it was just jaw-dropping to see the progress there. Of course, I was enormously proud to visit our new consulate in Hyderabad – brand-new building which is spectacular. And as somebody who was involved in the original

conceptualization of having an American consulate there and remembers the days in Paigah Palace, it was really heartening to see the investment that we have made in our diplomatic platform there.

But even more, it was exciting to see how much is going on on the issues that I am responsible for. I had the opportunity to spend some time with Microsoft at their Hyderabad campus – second largest in the world – talking about what they're doing on renewables and energy transition. I was enormously encouraged by my conversations with Greenko, one of India's largest renewable energy companies, which is looking at significant new investments in storage and green hydrogen, including here in the United States. And it really illustrates how Indian companies are fully aligned with the United States in terms of our shared interest in reducing our exposure to Chinese domination of clean technology supply chains, and uniquely, I think, in the Indian case, using India's capacities in manufacturing and labor costs to build up a real alternative supply chain, recognizing that as we look ahead, one of the pacing factors in the success or failure of our collective energy transition is going to be our ability to scale the supply chains for everything from solar cells to wind turbines to hydrogen electrolyzers.

So that was very exciting. I was also thrilled to visit a startup called BILITY Electric, which manufactures EV three-wheelers. And BILITI is now selling of course in India, but also here in the United States, trying to fill a niche for essentially last-mile delivery for delivery services in big cities like Los Angeles and New York, where an Indian-style three-wheeler is much more suited than a big – a big step-van delivery truck, and doing so with deployable clean electric drive.

So super exciting time in Hyderabad. I also was thrilled to visit the tech hub there and to see what some of India's startups are doing, again, in the clean tech space, and the synergy between Indian startups and companies in the United States who are trying to tackle – trying to tackle this energy transition.

In Delhi, the excuse for me coming when I did was the U.S.-India Forum, Aspen India's event. Tremendous kudos to the organizers of that. And in particular I want to appreciate the very strong focus on energy transition, climate issues, around the larger discussion. I was really pleased in that regard to be joined by President Biden's chief climate advisor, Ali Zaidi, but also by my counterpart from the National Security Council, Sarah Ladislaw, which I think is a reflection of just how strongly the Biden administration across the board is focused on our energy partnership with India.

It was especially useful to have Sarah with me as we spent some time meeting with Tarun Kapoor at the prime minister's office. We have as one of the key frameworks for our cooperation with India in high technology areas the iCET framework, and our national security advisors have recently decided to add critical minerals and clean energy technology to the iCET as a new pillar. So it was really useful with Tarun, who I had met before, to talk through what is it across the broad array of cooperative areas between the U.S. and India in this pillar – what are the things that would benefit from being elevated at the prime minister's level, at the White House level, as, again, we seek to push the pace of deployment as fast as possible; also, to empower collaboration between our laboratories in areas of innovation. Because as I was constantly reminded – and India does a good job of really putting this right in front of you – if this was civil aviation, we would still be in the Wright brothers era in terms of so many of these clean energy technologies.

So there's a lot of innovation that's still to come, everything from new battery chemistries to more efficient motors to wind turbines like the ones I saw at GE a year ago, which are optimized for Indian wind conditions.

So there's just a lot – a lot, a lot of work to be done there. I was also, on the government side, enormously gratified to spend a little time with my old friend and Minister Hardeep Puri. Minister Puri and I had a broad discussion about our converging interests on energy security, about stability in global energy markets, the destabilizing impact of Russia's actions – the invasion of Ukraine – but also concerns around the Red Sea, concerns around Iran's activities, concerns around Venezuela, all of the – all of the disruptions in global oil markets in particular that the United States and India are navigating together, and our shared interest in the stability of those markets, delivering the energy our citizens need, and doing so in a way that has the lowest possible carbon footprint.

And then lastly, I was – I was extraordinarily gratified to spend some time with India's secretary of mines, Kantha Rao. We were focused on our discussions on follow-up to the decision we made last year to add India to the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) and the work that we want to do going forward. MSP is the Biden administration's flagship initiative for international cooperation on critical minerals, operating under the umbrella of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment. And we are working with India to identify projects, to identify opportunities for us to do more together.

And I came away from this trip enormously optimistic about the opportunities in the critical minerals area. India is already a strong participant, a strong partner in the MSP, but you're going to see us doing even more in the months and years ahead. I had the opportunity to spend some time, for instance, with the CEO of Epsilon Carbon, a company which manufactures a product which seeks to break the Chinese near-monopoly on a key battery component. Epsilon Carbon is doing so at a very large scale in India, but it's also looking to do so in the United States with a new greenfield battery component manufacturing facility here on the East Coast, in North Carolina. So that's a perfect example of what we see happening going forward. I also spent some time with the Tata team. I think Tata renewables, Tata transmission, and the CEO of Tata Chemicals, which is another company that's very active in this critical minerals area.

So I – as I said, to finish where I started out on this, I come back from this trip maximally bullish about the prospect for the United States and India to do even more together. Obviously, India is coming up on a national election and that's going to induce a certain pause in terms of high-level political decision making, but I think my conversation with Secretary Rao really illustrated how now the two bureaucracies are in a place where our progress is going to continue even through the natural political cycles of our democracies, because – as I said at the start – we have the same strategic objectives, we have an alignment in terms of our companies and what our private sectors are doing, and we have an enormous stake in the success of each other's transitions.

So I'll stop there. Happy to take some questions. Also happy to talk a little bit about what I'm going to do be doing along with Secretary Granholm and my DOE colleagues next week when I go to Paris for the 50th anniversary of the International Energy Agency, but let's start on India. Thanks.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Assistant Secretary Pyatt. We'll now begin the question-and-answer portion of today's briefing. So the first question that's been submitted in advance is from Dinakar Peri of *The Hindu*. Question is: "India-U.S. civil nuclear cooperation has been stuck. Has there been any movement? What are your views on Indian purchases of Russian oil? And any prospects for Indian access to clean technology?"

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: So three different questions. Let me do them in reverse order. Access to clean technology, of course. We are – it's already happening. It happens every single day. And as I said, we have now put clean tech into our iCET framework, which provides a White House and a PMO impetus to deepen that cooperation. So that's – that's easy.

On Russian oil, this was a big part of my conversation with Minister Puri. We both agreed – and I said the same thing at much greater length on my visit to India last year. India has played a key role in our effort to stabilize global energy markets in the face of the extraordinary destabilization caused by Vladimir Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine and his weaponization of his oil and gas resources. Russia – we have been successful in our implementation of the Russia crude oil price cap since last December – December of 2022 – in a way that has driven down Russia's oil revenue by about a third but has managed to keep Russian product on global markets in order to avoid further destabilization of a market that has already been roiled by Putin's actions.

India has been an essential part of that larger effort. And Minister Puri, quite naturally, made clear his desire to achieve the lowest possible price for the crude oil that India continues to need to power its economy. So there is no daylight between us – the U.S. and India – in terms of our approach to this issue.

And then finally on the civil nuclear issue: we had a lot of conversation around this question in the context of the U.S.-India Forum. I think everybody agrees – and it was especially important because we had – we had at the U.S.-India Forum a lot of the individuals who had played a key role in the architecting of this agreement two decades ago, including, of course, Foreign Minister Jaishankar, Ambassador Juster, Mike Green who was at the National Security Council when I was at Embassy Delhi and at the IAEA in Vienna, and a number of key supporters outside of government as well. I think everybody agrees that this is an important piece of unfinished business, and in that regard there is a shared interest to figure out how we can move forward both on the large traditional reactors, which were foreseen as part of the U.S.-India nuclear deal, but also, importantly, the fantastic new opportunities that are emerging around small and modular reactor technology. And in particular, the strong interest that I found from Indian companies, including Adani, Tata, Reliance, Birla – all of whom have expressed to me their interest in using SMRs as part of their larger decarbonization strategy.

Now, to move forward on that, a couple of things has – have to happen. One is our companies – companies in the United States, companies in India, companies elsewhere – have to figure out how to scale these SMR concepts to take the – take the designs that have been developed and get them to the stage of regulatory approval and industrial deployment. But the other thing that will have to happen in India is a revision of law to enable private companies to participate in the civil nuclear sector as private utilities do here in the United States. So this is going to take time, but it's a natural area of convergence.

And I think the point I would really emphasize – and this is what was driven home to me by the discussions – the really, really good discussions at the U.S.-India Forum – is how much we have delivered in terms of our strategic cooperation across the broad range of U.S.-India equities. And the discussions at the U.S.-India Forum were Chatham House, but I don't think Foreign Minister Jaishankar would mind me quoting him on one particular issue. He was asked whether the level of U.S.-India cooperation today, in 2024, has lived up to the expectations that we all had 20 years ago when the U.S.-India nuclear deal was promulgated. And when he was asked this question, I knew my answer right away, but I was really encouraged that Foreign Minister Jaishankar's answer was exactly the same as mine. That is that, in fact, we have gone much, much faster than anybody anticipated two decades ago and that our cooperation has become so broad and so deep, and that would not have been possible if we had not removed the nuclear – the nuclear chokepoint in our strategic relationship.

So I think that answers all three of your questions, and I for one am quite optimistic as we look to the future that we're going to continue to see deeper cooperation between the United States and India also in the area of civil nuclear power.

MODERATOR: Thank you, sir. Coming out of COP28, we have a question from Mohamed Maher of Al-Ain News in UAE. He asks: "Can you elaborate on the current state and future prospects of the Clean Energy Collaboration between the United States and the UAE?"

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: Yeah, thank you very much for the question. And I want to start as I've done in the past by really applauding the leadership that Dr. Sultan Al Jaber exercised as the president of COP28. This was a really groundbreaking COP. And in particular something that I think has been less appreciated was how important it was to have Dr. Sultan and the UAE Government bringing in not just the big G7-type economies, but especially in the areas around carbon management and decarbonization and energy transition, the big national oil companies from – everybody from Nigeria to Iraq, and of course the big other players in the Gulf.

And I watched over a series of months, joining Dr. Sultan in New York at the UN General Assembly as he brought together some of the Europeans in the developing world; in Madrid a month later. A really meticulous and careful effort to build consensus, and it's in the nature of multilateral diplomacy that nobody gets everything they want going in. But I think the kind of consensus that was achieved at COP28 was really critically important in terms of accelerating our energy transition, building agreement on the importance of reducing the carbon intensity of the energy we use as fast as we possibly can – the urgency of the moment – using all the available technologies, including much closer attention to issues around methane and methane abatement and monitoring; the importance of carbon sequestration, something that Secretary Kerry talked about in the context of a really good roundtable of leaders focused on the carbon management challenge.

So I think huge credit is due to UAE for that aspect of the exercise. But in terms of our bilateral relationship, this is not the end of the road by any means. To the contrary, we have a strong partnership between the U.S. and India in the context of our joint agreement to collaborate, to accelerate the deployment of clean energy around the world. And so I'm

encouraged by my conversations and our collective conversations as a government with the leadership of Masdar, which is UAE's clean energy investment arm, and the prospects for us doing much more together.

And of course, while I was in India, I heard from lots and lots of companies that are having conversations with Masdar about different financing opportunities in order to grow the clean energy portfolio. They're in India, which, to come back to that point, India's economy is so big, the decisions that it's going to make about its future energy pathway are so important that building this kind of cooperation is of critical importance. I would also note in this regard that on the U.S.-UAE side, we have I2U2, bringing together Israel, India, UAE, and the United States to build economic opportunities.

And I should also flag in this context and in the context of – in the context of PGII , the very significant initiative which we've called IMEC, the India-Middle East Corridor. And I was really impressed, having visited both Riyadh and New Delhi in January, to see the level of enthusiasm, the strategic focus on the IMEC initiative, and the expectation that that initiative inevitably is going to have a significant energy component to it as well.

So there is a lot for us to do with UAE. I would also note finally our appreciation of the support that UAE is providing to Azerbaijan as the Azeris take over as the chair of COP29. They've got a lot of work ahead of them, and I think UAE's successful stewardship of its COP presidency offers a good template for the Azeris, and we appreciate the fact that UAE is leaning into providing support there.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Our next question is from Rituraj Baruah of the Mint: "Do you think, amid the volatility in energy markets in the past two years, the emphasis on phasing out fossil fuels has weakened?"

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: No, not at all. I think in many ways it's become more important, and I think anybody sitting in India understands that. I was – when I was in Delhi, we had a couple of days of really poor air quality, and as somebody who has lived in Delhi off and on a total of seven years since 1992 – so 32 years now, I hate to say – you can see how air quality has deteriorated. And that reflects good news, which is the growth of the Indian middle class and the extraordinary expansion in the number of cars and power requirements and everything else, but also the real challenges that we all face in terms of how to deliver the energy that the world needs in a way that's affordable, in a way that provides economic justice, but also in a way that's much more sustainable.

So, I would disagree dramatically with the suggestion that the volatility of energy markets, which has mainly been a result of one man – a dictator, Vladimir Putin, who overturned a smoothly functioning international energy market with the weaponization of his energy resources – I would – I would take issue with the suggestion that that should cause us to give up on the work of energy transition. In fact, in many ways, it argues for accelerating that work, because over the long term, if we really want to build energy security – and India is a great example of this – India has some of the best solar and wind resources in the world. It has tremendous potential to continue to innovate in all the areas I talked about earlier.

So, the way you build energy security is not be dependent on any one outside player. That's what we're trying to do with the Mineral Security Partnership. It's not about designing out China's role as part of the clean tech supply chain. It's about reducing a situation where we've allowed ourselves to become almost entirely dependent on a country which can then take steps – as China has done, for instance, with its export controls on spherical graphite – to use that resource domination as a coercive power against customers and countries around the world.

So, we have to keep leaning into this. We can't do so in a way that is blind to the social impacts, the need for price stability, the need for economic justice, as I talked about. But I see this as, as I said, an area of tremendous potential for collaboration between the U.S. and India, and an area where I think we're on the right track.

MODERATOR: Thank you. And just a reminder to our participating journalists: If you are interested in asking a question live, do not hesitate to click your "raise hand" button or type your question into the chat box. A next pre-submitted question is from Mr. Stephen Stapczynski of Bloomberg in India. And the question is: "Have U.S. allies raise concerns about the freeze on new permits for LNG export plants? How is the U.S. responding to them?"

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: So I get this question a lot. I'll tell you the two important aspects of this. First of all, this is a policy which has driven – been driven in the United States by our domestic agencies. So I am an offtaker. I am – my job is to explain to our allies and partners what the policy is and what the policy isn't. And in that regard, I've found that our allies who raise these issues with me tend to be quickly reassured when you explain to them what this is, which is a pause, and what it isn't, which is a moratorium or a reversal.

That is to say this policy will have no impact on currently permitted U.S. LNG exports. It also does not take away from the fact that American LNG producers have played an absolutely indispensable role in helping the United States come to the aid of our allies and partners around the world in the face of Russia's weaponization of its energy resources. This policy also has no impact whatsoever on the very large volume of additional production which will come into the markets in the years ahead as a result of projects which have already been permitted, have already reached FID, and are now under construction.

So overall, the U.S. volume of gas liquefaction capacity and U.S. LNG exports is going to roughly double by the end of this decade, which is an extraordinary increment in terms of overall U.S. production. It will cement the United States role as by far the world's largest LNG producer. And it will contribute to global energy security, and it will make it much, much harder for Vladimir Putin ever again to weaponize his energy resources the way he tried unsuccessfully to do against Europe and our other allies starting in 2022.

So, I think when you lay all of this out, it's pretty clear that there is no reason for concern among our allies, whether they be in Asia like Japan, or in Europe. And we will see where the pause proceeds as a result of the domestic reviews that the Department of Energy will conduct. But that – those reviews will have no impact whatsoever on currently permitted projects.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Another pre-submitted question from Ajit Singh of Aaj Tak, India: "How will America react to India's rapidly growing clean energy sector?"

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: Really simple and quick answer: We'll welcome it. We will applaud it in every dimension for two reasons. One, because India is such a large economy that its decisions about its future energy pathway are going to have a decisive impact on whether or not we are able to keep 1.5 degrees of temperature change within reach. So we applaud it on its merits simply for that reason.

But there's another aspect to this as well, and it refers to the issues around supply chain that I mentioned earlier. It is not a coincidence that our Development Finance Corporation has invested more money in solar cell manufacturing in India than it has done any place else in the world. A new – excuse me, a new half-billion-dollar project in Tamil Nadu with First Solar, additional discussions with Indian companies like Tata, because India's capacity to do in the clean technology sector the same thing that it's doing in chips, in IT, in all of the other products where India is developing as the main global challenger to China's domination of manufacturing supply chains.

So, this is good for the United States and good for American consumers, because we're trying to accelerate our own energy transition here at home. We can't make enough of this stuff in the United States alone to tackle and to meet the targets that the Biden administration has set, which are now being supercharged by the Inflation Reduction Act. So there is just a lot for us to do together in this area as well.

MODERATOR: Thanks very much. Now we're going to take a live question from Sahil Pandey of ANI news wire service. Sahil, I am going to activate your chat function – or your audio.

QUESTION: Thank you for the opportunity.

MODERATOR: Sahil, do we have you?

QUESTION: Yeah. Am I audible now?

MODERATOR: Yes.

QUESTION: Hi, thank you for the opportunity, sir. My question is that the energy security and the conflicts which is going around across the globe – what's the future outlook in that regard? And how India and U.S. can collaborate in solving the energy security crisis, if it has? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: So, Sahil, let me answer that a couple of ways. And of course, the nature of the future is nobody can predict it for sure. But it's clear right now – as my boss, Secretary Blinken, has pointed out, as Jake Sullivan, our National Security Advisor, has pointed out – we are living through a moment of unprecedented turmoil in the international system. We have the terrible war in Ukraine, and Russia's brutal and ongoing invasion of its sovereign neighbor. We have the war between Israel and Hamas, and the destabilization that has followed from the terrible terrorist

attacks of October 7th. We have the actions of the Houthis in the Red Sea, which have destabilized a key global chokepoint for international commerce – including not just energy, which we have talked about a lot, but look at what's happening to global container shipping as container – containerized shipping has been rerouted and the impact that that potentially has on inflation, on the cost of goods, and the integration of our global economic system.

So in the face of that destabilization, the United States and India, we all need friends and allies, and we come to all of these issues that I've just talked about as two democracies, as two maritime powers. And in that regard, it was striking to me the weekend that I was in Delhi, you had the Indian navy intervening to save a tanker ship that was on fire as a result of a Houthi missile strike. Of course, the United States navy has a significant presence in the Red Sea now as well, with the *Eisenhower* and her carrier group. But it was the Indian navy that came to the rescue of that ship, and it was so striking to see the videos of the Indian firefighters on board, and then the – I saw some TikToks with the captain of that ship afterwards expressing tremendous gratitude to the Indian navy for having saved his ship.

So that illustrates how India's capacity as a net security provider in the wider region benefits the United States. It's exactly why we created the Asian Quad, what we're doing together with Japan, Australia, the United States, and India. So we're going to need more and more of that kind of partnership as we look to the future, especially as we try to navigate this particularly disruptive moment.

Now, I will say, eventually Putin will be stopped, the war in Ukraine will end, the Houthis will stop doing what they've been doing in the Red Sea, but we're going to continue to need to work together, and especially on these long-term strategic issues – for instance, around energy and climate change.

So this is a very, very important relationship for the United States. And as I said, I came back from my time in Delhi just feeling maximally bullish about the prospects for us to do even more together in the future.

MODERATOR: Thank you. A reminder to our participating journalists to raise your hand if you're interested in asking a question. And we have another live question from Richa Mishra of the Hindu Business Line. Richa, I'm going to unmute you. Do we have you?

QUESTION: Yes. Good evening, and thank you for giving this opportunity. I just wanted a – I had a supplement question. You just elaborated about the recent decision which was taken on putting – you said it is not – it is a pause, it is not restriction – on the LNG issue. My question to you, though, was, that: Would you be considering an FDA with India? Because that's a big thing for exporting LNG from U.S.

And my second – apologies for using this opportunity and putting in another question. My second question to you is that: Given the scenario which is yes, India is going for elections, but what is the oil price which U.S. sees itself comfortable at, being one of a big producer?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: Yeah, so, let me – let me do those two questions. I never talk about prices, because I'm not responsible for the issues and I don't want to say or do anything which looks as if I'm playing the market, because

my role is a strategic role. So let me put that one to the side.

In terms of the U.S.-India trade relationship, I'll say a couple of things. I was reminded when I was at the U.S.-India forum, I was working at the embassy in Delhi when Ambassador Blackwill gave his famous "flat as a chapati" speech about the U.S.-India economic relationship. That may well be remembered as the most famous single phrase about U.S.-India relations in the 20th century, because everybody remembered it. But I would also note that nobody today characterizes that trade relationship as flat as a chapati. It's become big and puffed up like a big puri or something. And that reflects the unleashing of the Indian economy, the huge increase in the volume of U.S. imports from India for all the reasons I talked about earlier, but also a significant increase in U.S. exports to India, of which energy and energy products are a significant share.

So, I think we are not currently involved in any kind of a free trade agreement negotiation with India, but we have ongoing and important negotiations about how to facilitate a further deepening of our trade relationship. And of course our USTR, Ambassador Tai, has been deeply and personally engaged on this. So, I'm confident that as we get through India's elections and then we get through an election cycle in the United States, that direction of travel is going to continue. So again, I – one more reason to be bullish about where the relationship is going.

MODERATOR: Thank you. I'm going to take this next question as an invitation to go a little bit deeper on a topic you touched on earlier. This question is from Manash Bhuyan of the wire service Press Trust of India: "What is the status of discussion between India and the U.S. on small modular reactors?"

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: So, there are multiple levels to this conversation, some of which I conducted while I was in Delhi. We also have an intensive process of ongoing dialogue led by my DOE colleague, Katie Huff, who is the assistant secretary of energy for nuclear. And Katie is working with her counterparts at the Department of Atomic Energy to figure out how to work through issues that are well known to anybody who's involved in this sector, like liability. The iCET that I talked about earlier and adding clean energy into the iCET also provides a vehicle for introducing this SMR topic into the iCET conversation because the clean energy pillar naturally lends itself to a conversation about SMRs.

But then also really, really important is what's happening with the private sectors. Companies like Holtec, headquartered in Pittsburgh, talking with counterparts in India – and I already named the four or five companies that I have heard from directly at the CEO level that are interested in developing SMR opportunities. And then there's the really interesting question of what India can do as part of the supply chain. So India has highly developed, competent heavy engineering companies like L&T, Larsen & Toubro, that have been involved in this sector for many, many years, and we are – if we are going to be successful in building out an SMR industry and a supply chain, we're going to need industrial partners around the world. That's why Japanese firms like IHI are already partnering with SMR developers here in the United States, and I think there's no reason why Indian engineering companies, whether L&T or Tata or take your choice, could also be part of that supply chain.

So, I think what we're going to see is multiple lines of effort. One of the companies that I mentioned to you, Holtec – Holtec is targeting to have their first SMR demonstrator deployed in Michigan by 2029, which in the nuclear sector is basically tomorrow. So, there's a lot for us to do in this area, and I think it's a sign of health that we have these discussions going on at multiple levels across our governments and across our private sector. I had the opportunity when I was in Delhi to also conduct a roundtable chaired by U.S.-India Business Council, and USIBC has also been a key – a key enabler of our work together on this set of issues.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We have time for one last live question, and that question will go to Siddhant Sibbal of Wion. Siddhant-ji, are you able to speak?

QUESTION: Hi, ma'am. Can you hear me?

MODERATOR: We can.

QUESTION: Sir, my question to you is there have been concerns in the relationship. There have been irritants, to use the phrase. One is the Khalistani extremists present in U.S. Do you think that this is something that has the potential to create problems in the relationship?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: So I'm going to leave that one to the —

MODERATOR: Siddhant —

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: I'm going to leave that one to the side because it's a set of issues that I'm not responsible for. But Siddhant, if I can – if I can circle back to another issue that I'd like to spend another minute on because it's really, really important, and that's our critical minerals cooperation.

And just to note, my meeting with the Secretary V.L. Kantha Rao took place at Shastri Bhawan, and I've been – I've been driving up to Shastri Bhawan for more than 30 years. And I have never been in a meeting like the meeting that I had with Secretary Rao that was so pragmatic, that was so focused on specifics of how do we drive the relationship forward, and so strongly informed by the understanding that we had converging interests. So, I just see this critical minerals initiative as just such an important aspect of our wider relationship.

Also, the private sector aspects to this – there is a tweet, which I think you can find if you look under Twitter on the account of SAFE, which is our private sector partner for critical minerals cooperation under the Mineral Security Partnership, and SAFE was picking up on an article that was written about some of my work in this area as well. Because there's just so much more for us to do, I'm very glad that Secretary Rao is going to be coming to North America, to the PDAC conference in Canada in a couple of weeks. He will there have a bilateral meeting with, among others, our Under Secretary of State Jose Fernandez, who has been driving a lot of this critical minerals work.

And I just see this as a huge area of deepening engagement between our countries as we look forward. And it's an area that, frankly, has no irritants whatsoever, to use the word you invoked, but rather is entirely defined by our converging interests, the understanding that India can deliver things that the United States is incapable of delivering in areas like recycling and mineral processing, and an understanding that both of us have an instinctive inclination to figure out how we de-risk our current dependence on Chinese supply chains in this area.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. That's all the time we have today on our focus topic, and I'd like to thank everyone as we conclude our briefing. Thank you very much, Assistant Secretary Pyatt, for your time; to all of the journalists who've joined us today to learn more about the U.S. policy and our shared energy priorities with India. This has been an on-the-record briefing, and all remarks can be attributed to Assistant Secretary Geoffrey R. Pyatt by name.

If you have any questions about today's briefing, you may contact the London Media Hub at londonhub@state.gov. Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PYATT: Great. Thank you very much, everybody. Have a good evening.

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